THE SOLDIERS' MONUMENT

In the year of 1909, a beautiful soldiers' monument was erected on the campus of the Central School, dedicated to the men of the 42nd, 76th, and 113th infantry, and the 4th Illinois Cavalry, as companies from these regiments were organized in Momence.

The credit for this monument is largely due to the ladies of the Woman's Relief Corps, as they did the planning and soliciting funds, as well as making the arrangements for the dedication. But the patriotic citizens who gave the money are the ones to whom much honor is due. The suggestion for a monument was made in 1906 when Mrs. Mary McKee was president. It was at a meeting in 1907 that Mrs. Orra Allen, made a motion that the $100 made at a bazaar, be appropriated for the building of a monument.

Mrs. Lucia Vail was president in 1907 and appointed as purchasing committee, Mrs. Flora Gray, Mrs. Angie Bellenger, and Mrs. Sadie Lilly. Mrs. Lilly resigned, and Mrs. Allen was appointed. Mrs. Gray resigned, and Mrs. Allen was elected as chairman by the corps. In June, Mrs. Vail appointed Mrs. Alice Love, Mrs. Ida Dayton, Mrs. Mary Parks, Mrs. Sarah Hess, and Mrs. May Miner as the soliciting committee. In June at a meeting held at Mrs. Allen's, it was decided to erect a monument to cost $1000. Mrs. McKee moved away and Mrs. Penzie Manzer was elected treasurer and filled the position very creditably. The program committee was composed of the following members: Mrs. Sadie Lilly, Mrs. Ida Dayton, and Mrs. Orra Allen.

After giving teas, dinners, and a concert, in January 1909, the contract for the monument was awarded to Gilbertson & Strong, of Belvidere, Ill.

Mrs. Vail was given again president in 1909, and in February, the program

committee, with the assistance of Mr. J.S. Garrett, of Momence, and Attorney W.R. Hunter, of Kankakee, secured the consent of Governor Deneen to make the dedicatory address on July 5th. Great plans were made for a fourth-of-July celebration, but it rained all day.

Governor Deneen came and delivered an eloquent address in the Baptist Church, and the unveiling of the monument was witnessed by hundreds, instead of thousands, but for the rain. The history of the regiments was read by Mrs. Flora Gray. The two little girls, who pulled the ribbons unveiling the monument, were Helen Nichols, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Fred M. Nichols, and Iris Hicks, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. H.C. Hicks. The four grandfathers of these pretty maidens served in the regiments to which the monument was dedicated.

Mrs. Orra Allen and Mrs. Ida Dayton are daughters of the 113th Infantry and the 4th Cavalry, respectively, and were very enthusiastic in the building of the monument. Hundreds of others deserve special mention, but lack of space forbids.

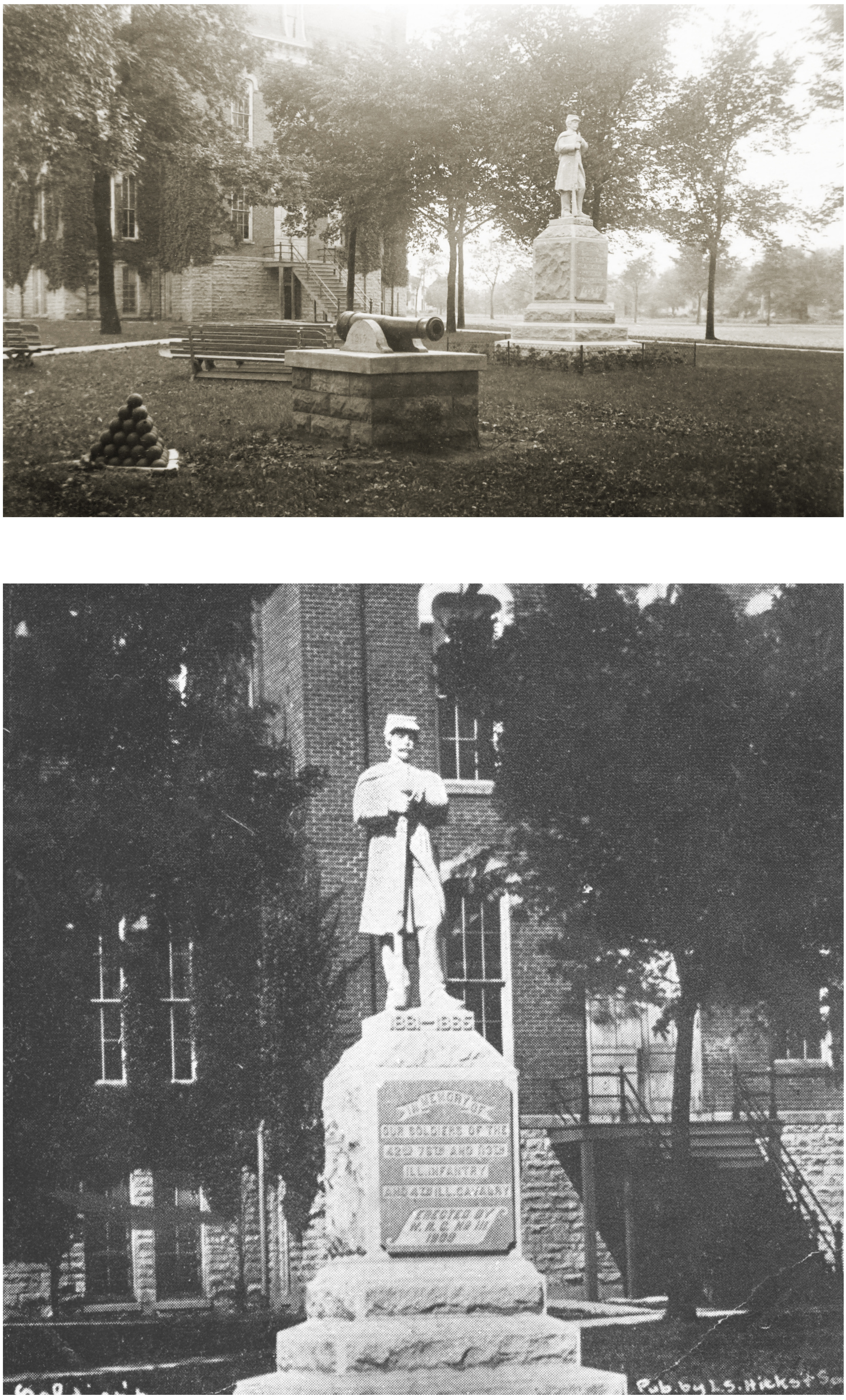
The monument is sixteen feet high and stands on a concrete base. It represents a volunteer soldier at parade rest and is a "thing of beauty" as well as durability. It will stand for years, telling the students of our public schools that in 1861 our citizens were patriotic, and in 1909 the people and the W.R.C. had not forgotten the noble dead, nor the heroic deeds of the old soldiers.

Source: 1910 Momence High School Yearbook. By Wayne Allen.

Helen Nichols and Iris Hicks

April 19th. 1912 Momence Paper

Steps are being taken to improve the school grounds. The cannon will be placed upon a concrete base, and an iron fence will be erected around the soldiers' monument and the cannon. Flowers will be planted within the enclosure. A pyramid of cannonballs will be placed near the cannon.



Photos courtesy of the 1910 yearbook and the Graham Historic House.